

Merseyside

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a look at the alternatives

IN THE LAST ISSUE OF M.U.F.O.B. ALAN SHARP ARGUED
THAT THE "EXTRATERRESTIAL HYPOTHESIS" (ETH) MUST BE
RETAINED AS THE BASIS OF UFO RESEARCH.
JOHN RIMMER DISPUTES THIS, AND LOOKS AT SOME OF
THE ALTERNATIVES

Plus... Reviews, reports, and regular features

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E D I T O R I A L

Cliches

As we said in our last issue, some UFO magazine writing is appalling. It is vague, woolly and abounding with cliches.

There is no excuse for this. If we are to fight the good fight we must gird our loins and, putting our best foot forward, put our shoulders to the wheel and our noses to the grindstone. There are straws in the wind--indeed, the writing is on the wall--warning us that we will encounter some rough going as we press on regardless along the straight and narrow path before we reach the calm, sunlit uplands, so to speak.

L E T T E R T O T H E E D I T O R

From: Dr J.CLEARY-BAKER, Editor of MUFORA Journal

Dear Mr Harney,

If all small UFO publications maintained the high standard of MUFORG BULLETIN and its successor MERSEYSIDE UFO BULLETIN, I would not object to them. You have done an excellent job with both periodicals and I have enjoyed your periodic sly digs at me.

In general, however, it must be remarked that cash, talent and labour are in limited supply in the field of UFO research. A few well-produced and "meaty" journals are preferable to a host of inferior ones. Furthermore, the public image of UFO research must be harmed by scruffy, hole-and-corner publications abounding in silly opinions, grammatical errors and even spelling mistakes.

I am willing to welcome as a colleague any genuine researcher, from 9 to 90. I am not, however, prepared to suffer gladly the sort of young - or not so young - fool who is unwilling to engage in the unglamorous spadework incidental to UFO research, but who is all too ready to inflict his half-baked notions on a long-suffering public.

Natural selection may, as you suggest, kill off the inferior publication in due time. The question is - how much harm may it do before it dies?

Yours truly, J.Cleary-Baker, Ph.D., 3 Devenish Road, Weeke, Winchester, Hants.

A LOOK AT THE ALTERNATIVES

by John A. Rimmer

For all its faults the ETII has many attractive features which commend a serious consideration of its claims. These can be summarized:

-- It fits the facts as reported, at least to a superficial degree. The majority of 'straight' UFO reports do accord with what one would expect from some advanced form of interstellar or interplanetary transport.

-- It is an explanation that is within human experience. It is clearly defined, and does not involve the introduction of new and unfamiliar concepts.

-- It is finite. It is capable of being proved or disproved, and analyzed in a straightforward scientific manner.

-- It is an attractive theory, both to the scientist and extravert, who would be excited by the thought of contact with an advanced civilization; and to the type of person who is receptive to space-brother ideas.

Obviously any other theory that claims to offer an explanation of the UFO must be strong indeed to take precedence over the ETII. The other explanations that have been put forward can be divided into three general categories: Physical Craft Theories, Natural Phenomena Theories, and Subjective Phenomena.

If one presupposes a physical craft, it must have an origin. Ruling out the ETII it must come from Earth. Many ufologists have put forward just such explanations. Perhaps the most spectacular is the idea propounded by Ray Palmer that the Earth is doughnut-shaped, with the UFOs originating from the part on the inside. Like most ideas of this nature a vast framework of shaky pseudologic has been painstakingly erected to provide some justification for it. The main interest with this theory lies in the examination of the mental imbalance of its fanatical adherents. The Hollow Earth Theory does at least accept the spherical nature of the Earth, but alleges that it is either a hollow sphere with an alternative world on the inside curve, or that there is a vast world-wide network of caverns which shelter a race of deranged robots - dero - bent on wreaking havoc amongst humanity. Again, considerable 'evidence' is presented to prove both of these theories. This evidence ranges from mysterious disappearances, strange caves and cave creatures, to the alleged 'land beyond the poles' where this world is supposed to open onto our own. These theories can be dismissed by a rational examination of the facts, although there is no denying the attraction they have for some people. It is possible that blaming the 'dero' for all the ills that befall mankind is a subjugation of the feelings that in other circumstances have blamed Jews, Negroes or foreigners.

Another terrestrial explanation suggests that the UFOs originate from under the sea. Often this is coupled with the ETII, claiming that there are undersea bases built by aliens. Or that there are underwater 'gates' to the inner world of the dero. Often the idea of Atlantis is introduced into these explanations. It can be considered as a refinement of the previous theories rather than an explanation in its own right.

Other Earth-bound explanations include unknown civilizations situated in the Andes or in Tibet, or in some other comparatively remote part of the world. An 'explanation' that is constantly resurrected is that the UFOs are secret craft of some terrestrial nation, variously identified as USA, USSR, Britain, even Italy and other less plausible nations.

The basically unsatisfactory nature of all these explanations is apparent. It can be summed up in the thought that if all the apparent UFOs and UFO related phenomena were Earth-originated the facts would be so incredibly difficult to avoid that the matter would be common knowledge. The proponents of these theories do

provide explanations for this, but these are so involved, requiring massive official secrecy, infiltration, suppression, intimidation, et al, that they become harder to accept than the original theory.

The Natural Phenomena theories must to a large extent be accepted by all serious ufologists. They cover what might be termed the range of 'Menzelian Phenomena', and are the explanation for many of even the so-called 'unexplained' UFO events. If one can also accept the distinct possibility of an unknown or little known natural phenomenon one could probably account for 99% of even the 'unexplained' cases that crop up in the typical 'lights in the sky' sighting reports. Having said this one must add that a desire to explain all UFO sightings in these terms is as irrational and probably as worthy of psychiatric study as a desire to explain the matter in terms of doughnut shaped Earths, or underground civilizations. There are obviously limits, drawn by the physical structure of the Earth and the atmosphere and the laws of science, to what a natural phenomenon can do. This applies even to as-yet-unknown phenomena. Similarly, even allowing for untrained observers there are limits to the misinterpretation of facts that a rational person can make.

The range of subjective explanations is the widest of all, from theories that all UFO witnesses are psychotics to total mysticism. As the subjective aspects of ufology have only been probed with any enthusiasm in the past two or three years the various theories have not been worked out in as much detail as have the Physical Craft theories. One theory that has been presented in some detail is Allan H. Greenfield's concept of 'Alternate Realities'. This is a complex idea to explain, but it involves a number of universes occupying the same space and time, but on different 'planes' of existence. Put thus baldly it may seem to be confined to the realms of science fiction. However, some recent discoveries in sub-atomic physics may cause one to pause before discarding the idea completely. The theory explains the UFOs as 'projections' from one of these other realities. Possibly the main value of a theory such as this is to force us to re-examine our concepts of 'reality'.

Another subjectivist theory that has been worked out in some detail is Jung's idea of the UFO as part of mankind's 'racial memory', a collective experience that is born into everyone. Various forces stimulate this memory, and cause subjective responses that are discerned as UFOs, psychic phenomena, and a wide range of supernatural entities and events. This theory accepts and accounts for the characteristic elusive quality of all these events, whilst at the same time explaining their relevance to an exceptionally wide range of the public. Critics however can point to the all-inclusive nature of this theory, and claim that it is a convenient 'get-out', to avoid many complex explanations.

Psychotic conditions in individual percipients are certainly relevant to some UFO events. A variety of marital, sexual and other personal anxieties may be worked out in a UFO context; many of the more bizarre and sensational contactee incidents can be seen in these terms. Whether similar conditions apply to more emotionally well balanced witnesses and less spectacular events is something on which research is currently being done.

The pioneering work which John Keel is undertaking in the study of the vast range of associated phenomena has revealed many hitherto unknown facets of the UFO problem. These seem to take the subject beyond any of the theories outlined above. Seemingly, objective events seem to be linked with other events of a very subjective nature. Attempting an explanation for many of the incidents he describes takes one through the theories at an increasingly confusing rate. The overall theory that seems to be emerging from his work, and that of others who are independently following the same line of research, is that much of the phenomenon

is part of an elaborate hoax or deception. This is a very attractive theory, considering some of the more outrageous aspects of UFO experiences. It would seem that the strength or weakness of this theory depends on who is supposed to be doing the hoaxing. So far no definite suggestions have been put forward, although we may anticipate some revelations in Mr Keel's forthcoming book.

Other 'subjectivist' theories move into completely occult fields. One school of thought suggests that UFOs are a variant of spiritual and/or religious or crypto-religious manifestations. In its more extreme form this holds that the UFOs and their alleged occupants are 'the Angels of the Lord', or the Devil. This is a direct reversal of the ETH which explains that Biblical descriptions of Angels and Devils are misinterpretations of extraterrestrial contacts. So little serious attention has been given to that class of phenomena described as 'occult' that many of the ideas associated with it seem rather woolly and indecisive. One interesting idea that has been put forward is that occult phenomena are so total and overwhelming that civilization is only possible through the action of the brain, which serves to filter out the occult influences. Exponents of this theory would allege that UFOs and the Associated Phenomena are aspects of the occult reality which have escaped the brain's filtering mechanism. Again, the complex and irrational nature of the phenomenon lends itself to such ideas. However there is as yet no overall theory worked out in any detail that can accomodate occultism in the light of present conventional knowledge,

The theories outlined above range from the plausible to the ludicrous. It is however, in the light of our present knowledge, a dangerous practice to reject flatly any of them, although I have done that, by implication, in this essay. The terrestrial origin theorists in particular are on very shaky ground. The theories seem to founder on their own absurdity. (One school of thought alleges that the UFOs are controlled from a secret South American base by Hitler and Martin Borman.) Even so one cannot rule out secret weapons and military devices for a small proportion of events. Can such an explanation be ruled out entirely for Socorro or some of the Warminster incidents? The natural phenomenon, known or unknown, seems a distinct possibility as an explanation for many as yet unidentified sightings. This Bulletin has published a number of articles suggesting the racial-memory explanation, and pointing out folklore-occult-UFO links. At the same time the major drawback to most of the subjectivist theories has to be the lack of any viable conventional scientific basis. It can be argued, though, that scientific basis is the very last thing one would expect to find in occult phenomena. A valid point of view.

The ETH is a theory worthy of consideration, and many ufologists will feel that it is the only aspect of the phenomena that is of interest to them. However if they do they will miss a very large part of the mystery of ufology, and may risk adopting a closed-minded attitude to many aspects of the problem. At the present time probably the great majority of ufologists are adherents of the ETH, and the majority of UFO publications put forward this theory almost exclusively. There is a real danger that research into the other explanations will tend to be stifled by lack of encouragement and scarcity of suitable outlets for published work. It is vital that the alternative explanations should be given adequate consideration. The ETH must not be considered as the only explanation, with the assumption that if it is not the UFO subject then becomes something else, of less intrinsic interest.

SOME PERSONAL UFO EXPERIENCES - - - - - 1

by Alan W. Sharp

One summer evening in the early 1960's when on holiday with a friend in the South of France we parked our car at the eastern end of the promenade at Cannes. The sun was shining but approaching the horizon and hence we decided to leave cameras and binoculars behind whilst we went in search of accomodation.

We began to stroll slowly back towards the town and had gone perhaps sixty or seventy yards when I suddenly noticed a bright patch of light slowly crossing the sky in the vicinity of the hills which lay in front of us but beyond Cannes itself.

Excitedly I pointed and we both stood still and watched as the elliptical object continued its progress at apparently low altitude, going inland from the direction of the coast. If I remember correctly it had a bright centre then a black oval, surrounded in turn by a larger bright ellipse of light--white light, not coloured. Maximum angular dimension was about $\frac{1}{3}$ of a degree or even less.

Torn between the desire to run for camera and binoculars and fear of missing some feature of the apparition we continued to watch spellbound until, just before the object passed out of sight behind some obstacle--one of the hotels, probably--the light disappeared and was replaced by the distinct shape of an aeroplane, black in silhouette between the hills. A few seconds later and we should not have witnessed the change and would always have wondered at the nature of the UFO which we had seen.

How the peculiar effect was produced I have never been able to say with certainty but the thing looked like some sort of interference pattern, as such things are described in optics. The 'plane was possibly one of the helicopters which we had been noticing all day. At the time I had not heard of Arnold's famous Mount Rainier sighting, but it has often occurred to me since that what he saw may have been something similar to that which so startled my friend and me that day on the Riviera.

To those with a knowledge of optics, the difficulty lies in the fact that we saw white light "fringes", as they are called. Reflections from cabin windows? From rotor blades? Or what? The reader will notice, of course, the inevitable in such events.

At the crucial time, all the optical apparatus which had been carted around all day, was safely stowed away out of reach in the car! C'est la vie - des soucoupes insolites!

L O C A L U F O R E P O R T S

Sefton Park, Liverpool

January 4, 1970 0145 BST

Amateur astronomer Mr R. Halliday was in Sefton Park, facing north towards Ursa Major, taking photographs, when he heard a swishing noise behind him. He turned round and saw an ill-defined disc or object moving very fast across the sky from due east to due west. The brightness of the object was estimated to be about magnitude 3 and it did not vary. The object was seen for about 3 or 4 seconds and disappeared behind trees at an elevation of about 10 degrees. The sky was clear at the time of observation, but there was a ground mist.

Chester

February ?, 1970 Evening

The following report appeared in the Liverpool Echo on February 7. Unfortunately the date and time are not given:
Chester's mysterious UFO has made a reappearance in the

city's night sky. Unsighted since Christmas, it was seen for ten minutes in the Parkgate Road area.

The two men who saw the bright white object during the evening did not report their finding to the police because they were afraid of being treated as practical jokers. William, a window cleaner, of 13 Chichester Street, Chester, saw the UFO with his friend 19-years-old Gordon Jones, a foreman tyre fitter, of 27 Ludlow Road, Blaenau.

They were driving along the Parkgate road when they saw the bright object moving very slowly across the sky. The two got out of their van to get a better view of the object, which moved slowly, stopped and then shot off again.

"It was no plane either," said William. "For one thing it seemed to move like a snake and there was only one very bright light and no noise at all. We followed it in the van to the Blaenau Bridge where it seemed to stop and then shot off altogether."

During the last twelve months there have been several sightings of white "star-like" objects over Chester.

BOOKS

OPERATION EARTH by Brinsley Le Poer Trench - Neville Spearman, 30/-

The somewhat mystical speculations of this author are rather popular with a certain section of UFO enthusiasts. No doubt this is because he has, up to now, assured us that the UFO entities are friendly. However, in this book he develops his ideas to include some of the more "hostile" manifestations, presenting the UFO phenomenon as the sign of the struggle between good and evil entities for the domination of the minds of mankind.

UFOs - THE WHOLE STORY by Coral and Jim Lorenzen - Signet Books, New York, U.K. price 7/6

This latest book by the Lorenzens, a general review of the UFO situation, is rather heavy going. It has a fault which afflicts many UFO books--too many long-winded descriptions of one sighting after another. Such descriptions are of course useful for reference purposes, but only where an index--which this book lacks--is provided.

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